UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/C.5/50/71
17 June 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
FIFTH COMMITTEE
Agenda item 116

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Restructuring the Centre for Human Rights

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/214 of 23 December 1995, requested the Secretary-General, taking into account the proposals of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights made in the context of the ongoing process of restructuring the Centre for Human Rights, to establish in the biennium 1996-1997 a new branch whose primary responsibilities would include the promotion and protection of the right to development. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to formulate appropriate programmatic follow-up to the activities to be carried out by this branch, in particular follow-up to the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development in accordance with paragraph 6 of Assembly resolution 50/184 of 22 December 1995, for inclusion in the next medium-term plan.

2. The General Assembly further decided that the Secretary-General should report to the General Assembly at its resumed fiftieth session, making proposals on the appropriate level and distribution of resources for the Centre for Human Rights.

II. RESTRUCTURING THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

3. The World Conference on Human Rights recognized the need for a continuing adaptation of United Nations human rights machinery to the current and future needs in the promotion of human rights and that the activities of the United Nations in the field of human rights should be rationalized and enhanced. In that context, the World Conference called upon the General Assembly to consider

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the question of the establishment of a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The General Assembly, when establishing that post in its resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993, gave the High Commissioner responsibility for the rationalization, adaptation, strengthening and streamlining of the United Nations machinery in the field of human rights with a view to improving its efficiency and effectiveness and for the overall supervision of the Centre for Human Rights.

4. In June-August 1994, a review was carried out of the programme and administrative practices of the secretariat of the Centre for Human Rights. The results of that review indicated that, while the Centre possessed many strengths on which to build, there were areas in which its activities could be further improved. It was noted that the structure of the Centre had been organized around the servicing of organs and that that was an inadequate basis for effective and timely responses to violations or for significant support to the development of an institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. Over the years, secretariat structures had been created to respond to the ever-increasing mandates assigned to the Centre, which resulted in separate management units carrying out research or undertaking activities in the same fields. This gave rise to duplication of effort, lack of unity and a difficulty in developing Centre-wide expertise. Key processes, including handling complaints, supporting activities in the field, technical cooperation, research and servicing meetings were spread across almost all branches. A growing proportion of the staff resources were involved in servicing meetings at the expense of analytical work, too much time was spent recirculating existing information and not enough time was spent on new research. It was also noted that an increasing number of Governments requested technical cooperation projects but the rate of implementation of these projects was low and the staff dealing with them required more substantive backstopping and expertise in project formulation.

5. That study made a number of specific recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Centre. It was suggested that the secretariat of the Centre should provide more substantive servicing in terms of research and technical analysis and that a core of technical, qualified and skilled staff should be built up, inter alia, through staff training. On this basis, the Centre could play a leadership role in undertaking action-oriented research. Further, the need for substantive strengthening in terms of expertise was recognized in order to provide quality advice to Governments within the context of technical assistance activities; these activities would also benefit from an increase in expertise in project formulation and execution. Specific suggestions were made to deal with the need for greater coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the programme and assessing results and achievements, particularly in relation to technical cooperation projects, and a significant strengthening of the administrative services of the Centre was recommended. Training in administrative and financial matters was also recommended. These recommendations were made against the background of the essential and urgent need for a fundamental reappraisal and restructuring of the Centre's programme of work based on an assessment of the implications of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action for the programme of the Centre. The restructuring would focus the programme on priority objectives and strategies that strengthen its effectiveness and clearly define the mission of the Centre

in general and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in particular and would be followed by a reorganization of the Centre's secretariat in a manner to respond more adequately to the programme structure and facilitate the implementation of interrelated objectives and priorities.

6. In October 1994, after six months in office, the High Commissioner initiated a process aimed at restructuring the programme of work and the organization of the Centre in order to enable the Centre to respond to the new challenges arising from the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the mandate of the High Commissioner and to enable it to achieve its objectives effectively and efficiently. The High Commissioner placed his restructuring efforts within the context of the above-mentioned study and with the purpose of responding to the needs and recommendations that resulted. A number of steps have already been taken to respond to those recommendations, in particular through strengthening the administrative services of the Centre.

7. A review of the current organization and practices of the Centre was undertaken. This led to the identification of the form and nature of the support that should be given by the Centre to the human rights programme. It made clear that significant changes had to be made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the human rights programme and projects: (a) the management structure, roles, responsibilities and staffing resources of the Centre needed to be aligned with the objectives of the programme so that responsibilities of groups and individuals are clear and coherent, overlapping be reduced to a minimum and accountability for performance be clear at all levels; (b) information and training were required in order to enable the Centre's management, to plan and monitor the use of resources available for the human rights programme; (c) optimum use of present and future staff resources needed to be made by identifying the competencies required for the key roles established in the restructuring and introducing a process to help develop staff to enable them to perform current roles better and to prepare them for future roles; (d) a coherent vision of how the human rights operation will use, process, manage and distribute information in the foreseeable future, internally and externally needed to be developed; and (e) ways for establishing more fruitful relations with partners within and outside the United Nations system that play significant roles in human rights needed to be designed.

8. A plan for the implementation of these significant changes was developed with the full participation of the High Commissioner, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and staff of the Centre and is coordinated with the central administration. The High Commissioner has periodically informed Member States of the progress being made in this area.

9. The phased implementation of the changes has begun taking full advantage of United Nations resources and expertise. All restructuring activities are carried out in full conformity with applicable United Nations rules and procedures.

III. NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

10. The design of the new management structure was based on the premise that all mandates and outputs authorized or requested by policy-making bodies within the human rights programme should be fully supported and that additional support should be given to the right to development. In addition, it was decided that the new structure should provide flexibility and clear and coherent roles within the organizational set up; provide for clear accountability for individuals and groups; be directed towards action and achievement; and show clearly the interrelation and interaction with others.

11. In February/March 1996, the senior management of the human rights programme reviewed the structural needs of the High Commissioner/Centre. This review led to the conclusion that three areas of management accountability were essential to success:

(a) Quality of information and analysis provided to United Nations human rights machinery and policy development;

(b) Efficiency of support provided to the United Nations human rights bodies and organs;

(c) Effectiveness of actions taken to promote and protect human rights.

12. The above principles and guidelines led to a basic structure comprising three branches reflecting a new philosophical approach to the organization of work, which focuses on strengthening the processes that come together to produce the outputs mandated by the human rights programme. It is a significant break with past practices, which led to much duplication, lack of coordination, inefficient use of resources and an inability to build up expertise in substance and meeting servicing.

13. The new structure is a streamlined one, designed as a continuum reflecting a functional approach towards the organization and flow of work. It is so designed that, with no additional coordination layer, the various activities will be coordinated within the normal work processes and thus produce comprehensive outputs. This approach will also provide for a focus and specialization for each function, the specialization of staff inputs leading to an improved quality of outputs, while at the same time providing more flexibility in the use of staff resources, thus increasing capacity to fulfil better all mandates at a time of increased scarcity of resources. The new structure also provides for a strengthened New York office and an Administrative Unit. It further includes a Management and Planning Unit, which will assist the High Commissioner and Assistant Secretary-General in providing coordination, coherence and guidance in the formulation of the work programme and in monitoring implementation, assessing results and reviewing progress.

14. The basic responsibilities of the three branches which have been defined in general terms are in the process of being further refined to ensure that the highest standards of support will be provided to all mandates and activities. The main responsibilities of the three branches are set out below.

A. Research and Right to Development Branch

15. The Research and Right to Development Branch will have the following responsibilities:

(a) To promote and protect the right to development, in particular through:

(i) Support to the intergovernmental group of experts on the preparation of the strategy for the right to development;

(ii) Assisting in the analysis of the voluntary reports by States to the High Commissioner on the progress and steps taken for its realization and on obstacles encountered;

(iii) Carrying out research projects on the right to development and preparing substantive outputs to the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and treaty bodies;

(iv) Assisting in the substantive preparation of advisory services projects and educational material on the right to development;

(v) Providing substantive analysis and support to the High Commissioner in his mandate to enhance system-wide support for the right to development;

(b) To carry out substantive research projects on the whole range of human rights issues of interest to United Nations human rights bodies in the light of the priorities established by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and resolutions of policy-making bodies. This will include, inter alia, subjects such as the combat against racism, the integration of the human rights of women, the protection of children and the rights of indigenous populations, minorities and migrant workers;

(c) To provide substantive services to human rights organs engaged in standard-setting activities;

(d) To prepare documents, reports or draft reports, summaries, synthesis and position papers in response to particular requests;

(e) To provide policy analysis, advice and guidance on substantive procedures;

(f) To manage the information services of the human rights programme, including the documentation centre and library, inquiry services and management of the human rights databases.

B. Support Services Branch

16. The Support Services Branch will have the following responsibilities:

(a) To plan, prepare and service sessions/meetings of the Commission on Human Rights, the Subcommission and related working groups and the treaty bodies and their working groups, by:

(i) Ensuring that substantive support is provided in a timely manner to the human rights body concerned, drawing on the appropriate resources of the human rights programme;

(ii) Preparing State party reports for review;

(iii) Coordinating the preparation and submission of all substantive and other documents, and the support from other management units to the activities of bodies serviced, following up on decisions taken at meetings;

(b) To plan, prepare and service sessions of the boards of trustees of the voluntary funds;

(c) To handle communications submitted to treaty bodies under optional procedures and the handling of communications under the procedures established by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1503 (XLVIII).

C. Activities and Programmes Branch

17. The Activities and Programmes Branch will have the following responsibilities:

(a) To provide advisory services and manage technical cooperation projects at the request of Governments;

(b) To organize and deliver lectures and training courses and similar activities;

(c) To manage the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation;

(d) To plan, support and evaluate activities and missions;

(e) To organize seminars, training courses, information and educational activities and the development of advisory services and technical cooperation activities for the right to development;

(f) To implement the Programme of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education;

(g) To organize seminars, training courses, educational material and information activities in the context of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and

Racial Discrimination and the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People;

(h) To support special rapporteurs, special representatives, experts and working groups mandated to deal with situations or types of alleged violations of human rights.

18. The new management structure will enhance the various competencies and skills needed to support the human rights programme and will allow greater expertise to be developed and placed at the disposal of all activities of the human rights programme. Research and analysis capacity will be enhanced and duplication of activities will be reduced to a minimum. Each area will have clear and coherent tasks and objectives and identifiable individuals or groups to be served. This will allow better management of resources, provide for more transparency and facilitate access by persons outside the Centre to those individuals responsible for the different subjects or activities.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

19. The chiefs of the three branches have been nominated on an ad interim basis. They have as a priority task to help define the structure, activities and corresponding resource requirements of each branch. This is being done through a series of meetings and workshops involving the ad interim Chiefs and other staff members.

20. An analysis is also being carried out by the senior staff to determine the estimated workloads of the various entities within the new management structure and to identify precisely the number and grade level of posts to be assigned to each branch. Upon completion of this analysis, the results will be made available in an addendum to the present report.

21. Project teams consisting of four or five staff members have been established to support specific projects responding to needs in the areas of restructuring the Centre, planning and monitoring the use of resources and managing human resources, information and relations with partners. These teams report to a steering committee which, under the chairmanship of the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, supervises the various projects and makes recommendations to the High Commissioner.

22. The next stage will consist in preparing detailed job descriptions of the various posts, their classification and the identification of the staff members best suited to the posts. It is anticipated that, once the staff assignment exercise has been completed, the new structure will become operational in the latter part of 1996. Training will be carried out prior to that date to help prepare the staff for their new roles. Progress will also be made during this period with the other areas where change is necessary. Initial steps will be undertaken during this period in the implementation of the change project relating to managing people.

23. In order to support the new global and integrated approach to human rights based on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, which emphasized the

interrelated and interdependent nature of all human rights, it will be necessary to organize both short-term and long-term training in the various dimensions of human rights to ensure that all staff and those joining the Programme enjoy a broad knowledge of human rights from the United Nations perspective. This will enable them to perform their tasks more effectively and lay the bases for potential career development across the whole human rights programme.

24. The restructuring is not an end in itself but the beginning of a process of reform in the Centre aimed at increasing the responsiveness and effectiveness of United Nations activities in the field of human rights while ensuring full transparency in methods and procedures and high quality of the services provided.

25. It is important to recognize that a new structure alone will not resolve all existing problems and that success in the implementation of this new approach to managing the human rights programme will require a major shift in conceptual thinking and significant shifts in ways of working by all concerned.

V. RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

26. In its resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development and in its resolution 48/141 mandated the High Commissioner, inter alia, to promote and protect the realization of the right to development and enhance support from relevant bodies in the United Nations system for that purpose. In connection with his responsibilities in this matter, the High Commissioner has carried out a number of activities aimed at promoting and protecting the right to development which are reflected in his report to the General Assembly 1/ (A/50/36), Economic and Social Council (E/1995/112) and Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1996/103).

27. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/184 requested that a programmatic follow-up on the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development be provided as part of the efforts to implement the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. In the High Commissioner's view, one of the major objectives of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 should be the adoption and implementation of an integrated and multidimensional strategy for the promotion and protection of the right to development accompanied by a significant enhancement of support from relevant United Nations bodies for that purpose, pursuant to the Vienna Declaration, the mandate of the High Commissioner and resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights. The proposed medium-term plan includes a subprogramme relating to the right to development, research and analysis.

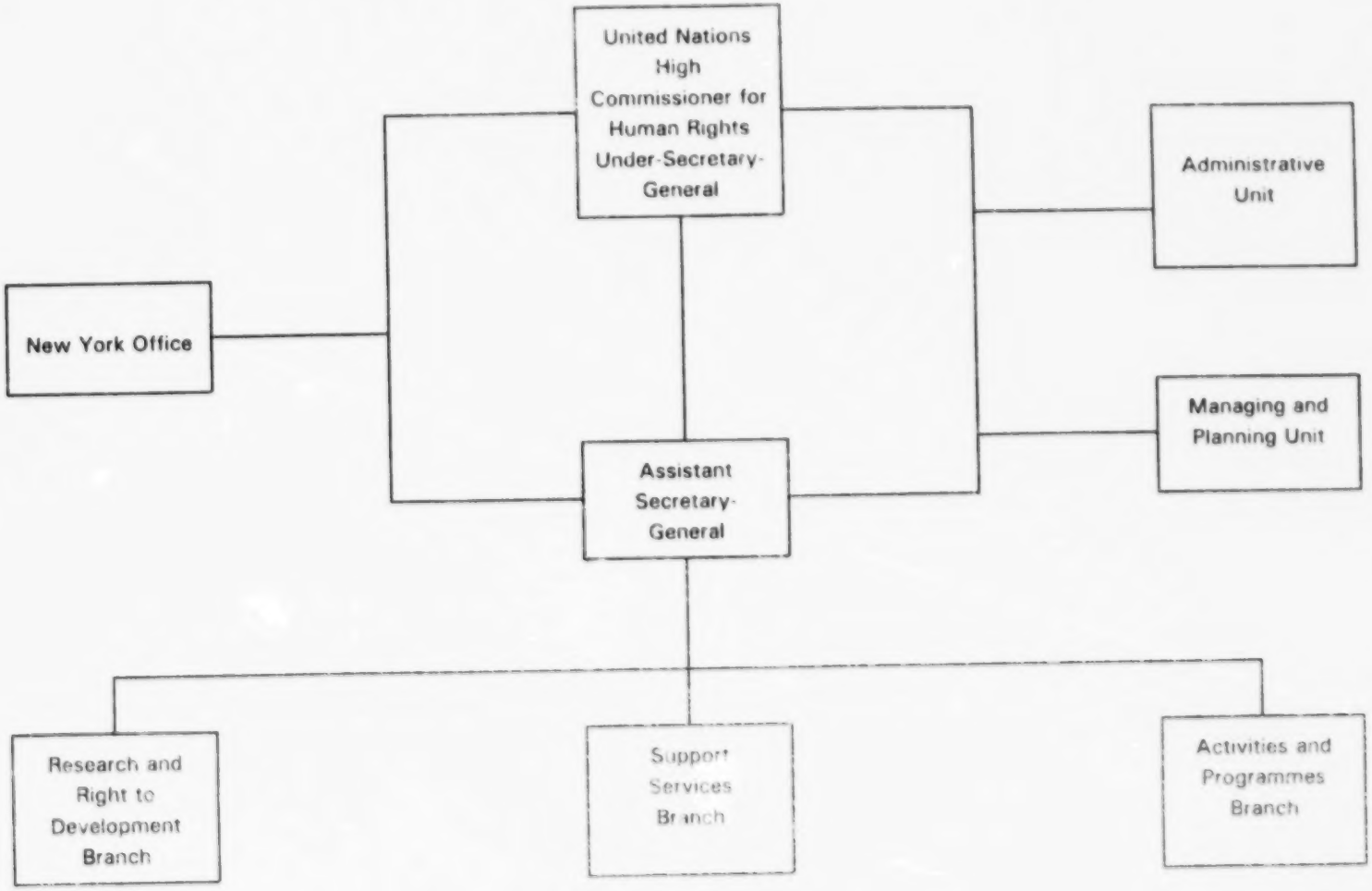
28. The High Commissioner has followed carefully the request of the General Assembly to establish in the biennium 1996-1997 a new branch whose primary responsibilities would include the promotion and protection of the right to development, bearing in mind the welcomed adoption of a consensus approach to this issue in the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights. The restructuring has led to the establishment of three branches including one for research and right to development, whose responsibilities have been outlined in paragraph 15 above. That branch will be charged with the implementation of

activities in support of the objectives relating to the right to development in the proposed medium-term plan. In addition, the High Commissioner will provide high level coordination to ensure that the right to development is given appropriate consideration within the United Nations human rights programme and in other areas of the United Nations system.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 36 (A/50/36).

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights


United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Under-Secretary-General
Administrative Unit
New York Office
Managing and Planning Unit
Assistant Secretary-General
Research and Right to Development Branch
Support Services Branch
Activities and Programmes Branch